

The Silent Film Era

1895-1928

The Kinetoscope

- Invented by Thomas Edison
- Peephole viewer for one person to watch moving pictures without sound
- 1894: 1st Kinetoscope parlor opened
- Films were usually slightly scandalous



Kinetophone



- Invented by Edison in 1895
- A Kinetoscope with a phonograph attached
- First time moving pictures were linked with sound
- Not as profitable as projecting to an audience and using an orchestra for sound, so Edison started to work on a projector instead



Projected Films

- December 28, 1895 → Birth of Cinema
 - Lumiere brothers invented a camera/projector called the Cinematographe
 - showed films to an audience
 - 1900: left film making to do something else since “cinema is an invention without a future”
- 1896: Edison invented his projector, the Vitascope
- Both Edison and Lumiere brothers showed films with live music accompaniment

Music in Early Films

- The size of the venue determined the music
- Music was often performed before and after a film
- Sometimes used as sound effects
 - Ex. Music only when there was a dance scene
- Sometimes performed continuously

Types of Music

- Both classical and popular music were used, but popular was preferred
- Films were used to introduce new songs
 - “song films” as early music videos

Foundations of Modern Film

1908-1919

- 1910s: films lengthened from one reel to 4-5 reels (each reel is 12-15 minutes)
- Larger movie theaters were built
- Actors became stars
- **United States became leader in film making**



Trends in Film Music by 1920

- Organ was the most common instrument
- Size of ensembles expanded due to larger theatres
- Compilation scores from the classics
- Cue sheets helped the musicians line up
- Original scores were created for specific films



Compilation Scores

- Classical pieces were adapted for films
 - Necessary due to more and longer films
 - Used pieces that weren't copyrighted
 - Studios had libraries of music organized by mood

Compilation Scores

- In desperation, we turned to crime. We began to dismember the masters. We began to murder the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Gried, J.S. Bach, Verdi, Bizet, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner– everything that wasn't protected by copyright from outright pilfering. The immortal chorales of J.S. Bach became an “Adagio Lamentoso” for sad scenes. Extracts from great symphonies were hacked down to emerge as “Sinister Misterioso” by Beethoven, or “Weird Moderato” by Tchaikovsky. Wagner's and Mendelssohn's wedding marches were used for marriages, fights between husbands and wives, divorce scenes; we just had them played out of tune, a treatment known as “souring up the aisle.” If they were to be used for happy endings, we jazzed them up mercilessly.

Max Winkler, Film Music Compiler

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Agitato No. 3

(Suitable for Gramophone or similar tone-arm, etc.)

Otto Langley

Allegro agitato

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Cue Sheets & Anthologies

- People wanted the music to support the drama
- Cue Sheets-indicated what type of music to play with each scene of a specific
 - Thomas Edison published music as well as cue sheets with his films
- Anthologies-books of music that pieces to match different moods and settings and could be used for many different films

Original Music Scores

- Early 1900s → rise in original scores
- By 1915 → declined due to longer films and larger orchestras with more instruments